

3/5/81

K

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: [REDACTED]
Document Number: 1981BUENOS01528

Page: 1

Channel: n/a

Q20

<<<<.>>>>

PAGE 01 BUENOS 01528 051622Z
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 SSO-00 /031 W
-----354257 051625Z /44

O 051500Z MAR 81
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8681

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☒ In Full

☐ Classify as ☐ Extend as ☐ Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 1528

Decapition
DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12065: RDS-1 3/5/90 (SHLAUDEMAN, HARRY W.) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: ARREST OF MEMBERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

REF: (A) STATE 54475; (B) LIMA 8667

1. ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT VIDELA RECOGNIZES THE DAMAGE THE
DETENTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS HAS DONE TO THE
GOA AND THE POTENTIAL FOR DISRUPTING THE PROGRESS TOWARD
A BETTER BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. ACCORDING TO HIM, THE
UNFORTUNATE TIMING WAS THE RESULT OF A REPORT THAT THE
FILES OF THE CELS ORGANIZATION WERE ABOUT TO BE SCATTERED.
THE PRESIDENT INSISTS THAT THE JUDGE IN THE CASE ACTED ON
HIS OWN AUTHORITY AND IS COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT. WHETHER
VIDELA CAN OR WILL DO ANYTHING TO ATTENUATE THE DAMAGE
REMAINS TO BE SEEN. END SUMMARY.

3. AT A PRIVATE MEETING YESTERDAY AFTERNOON (MARCH 4)
I RAISED OUR CONCERNS OVER THIS SUBJECT WITH PRESIDENT
VIDELA. HE SAID HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THE DAMAGE THE
ARRESTS HAVE DONE TO ARGENTINA'S IMAGE ABROAD, NOTING
THAT THE TIMING COULD NOT HAVE BEEN WORSE. AMBASSADOR
AJA ESPIL HAD ALREADY REPORTED TO HIM ON THE REPER-

PAGE 02 BUENOS 01528 051622Z

CUSSIONS IN WASHINGTON AND HE UNDERSTOOD THE SERIOUS
PROBLEMS CREATED IN OUR CONGRESS. HE ALSO SAID THAT

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 1

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: [REDACTED]
Document Number: 1981BUENOS01528

Page: 2

Channel: n/a

THIS EMBASSY'S EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN HAD BEEN REPORTED TO HIM OVER THE WEEKEND.

4. VIDELA GAVE ME THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF THE AFFAIR: THE POLICE LEARNED FROM AN INFORMANT THAT CELS WAS ABOUT TO MOVE ITS OFFICES AND THAT IN THE PROCESS THE MASSIVE DOCUMENTATION COLLECTED IN ITS FILES WOULD BE "DISPERSED". IN THE FILES, ACCORDING TO THE INFORMANT, WERE MAPS OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, LISTS OF NAMES OF MILITARY OFFICERS AND OTHERS, AND, MOST SERIOUSLY, NOTES ON THE DAILY MOVEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES OF THE TYPE THE TERRORISTS USED TO COMPILE. (VIDELA WAS CAREFUL TO SAY THAT HE COULD NOT VOUCH FOR ANY OF THIS, NOT HAVING SEEN THE DOCUMENTS.) THE POLICE THEN SOUGHT THE ORDER FROM JUDGE ANZOATEGUI. HE GRANTED IT WITH THE PROMISE THAT HIS SECRETARY ACCOMPANY THE POLICE ON THEIR ROUNDS TO GUARANTEE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO IRREGULARITIES.

5. THE PRESIDENT SAID HIS OFFICE HAD INTERVENED WITH ANZOATEGUI TO (A) GET THE JUDGE TO ISSUE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OR HOLD A PRESS CONFERENCE IN ORDER TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE DETENTIONS WERE NOT IRRESPONSIBLE POLITICAL HARASSMENT BUT RESULTED FROM SERIOUS CHARGES; AND (B) TO SPEED UP HIS EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCE SO AS AT LEAST TO GIVE THEIR LAWYERS AND FAMILIES ACCESS TO THE PRISONERS. THE FIRST HAS PROVED DIFFICULT BECAUSE OF A RECENT ADMONITION FROM THE APPEALS COURT WITH RESPECT TO MAGISTRATES WHO TALK PUBLICLY ABOUT CASES STILL IN PROCESS. THE SECOND WAS COMPLICATED BY THE ENORMOUS NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS SEIZED.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

PAGE 03 BUENOS 01528 051622Z

6. THE PRESIDENT HOPED THAT THE PRESSURE WOULD ABATE SOMEWHAT ONCE THE DETAINEES WERE NO LONGER INCOMMUNICADO. (ACCORDING TO THIS MORNING'S PRESS, ANZOATEGUI TOOK TESTIMONY FROM THE ACTIVISTS YESTERDAY AND THEY ARE NO LONGER INCOMMUNICADO--SEPTTEL). HE ASSERTED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE JUDGE IS TOTALLY INDEPENDENT AND THAT THE GOA WILL ABIDE BY HIS DECISIONS, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE. I ASKED ABOUT BAIL OR SOME OTHER FORM OF RELEASE. VIDELA SAID THAT WOULD DEPEND ON THE JUDGE'S FINDINGS. THE ARGENTINE CODE SPECIFIES THE CASES IN WHICH JUDGES MAY GRANT "CONDITIONAL LIBERTY". (ONE NEWSPAPER ACCOUNT HAS IT THAT UNAUTHORIZED POSSESSION OF PLANS

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 2

Current Class: [REDACTED]
Current Handling: [REDACTED]
Document Number: 1981BUENOS01528

DECLASSIFIED

Page: 3
Channel: n/a

OF MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IS AN OFFENSE FOR WHICH
CONDITIONAL LIBERTY CAN BE GRANTED).

7. I AGAIN EXPRESSED MY REGRET THAT THIS MATTER HAD
ARISEN TO INTERFERE WITH WHAT HAS BEEN STEADY PROGRESS
TOWARD A BETTER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES.
VIDELA SAID HE AGREED. IT WAS HIS HOPE, HOWEVER,
THAT AS THE FACTS BECAME KNOWN INTERNAL OPINION
WOULD COME TO REALIZE THAT THE DETENTIONS WERE THE
RESULT OF A STRICTLY-OBSERVED LEGAL PROCESS AND NOT
AND ACT OF POLITICAL REPRESSION.

8. COMMENT: I AM PERSUADED THAT VIDELA IS FULLY
AWARE OF THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS AFFAIR.
WHETHER HE CAN OR WILL DO ANYTHING TO REDUCE THE IMPACT
REMAINS TO BE SEEN. HE AT LEAST HAS OUR MESSAGE MOST
CLEARLY. IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS IT MUST HAVE
OCCURRED TO VIDELA AND SOME OF HIS MORE INTELLIGENT
COLLEAGUES BY NOW THAT THE ARRESTS HOLD A DANGEROUS
POTENTIAL FOR BACKFIRE. THE ACTIVISTS NOW HAVE A
GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN TO A WIDE AUDIENCE JUST
WHAT IT WAS THEY WERE UP TO: IDENTIFYING THE SOLDIERS
TO THE "DIRTY WAR" AND DOCUMENTING THEIR CRIMES. THE
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

PAGE 04 BUENOS 01528 051622Z

NAMING OF NAMES IS WHAT THE SECURITY FORCES FEAR
MOST.
SHLAUDEMAN
[REDACTED]

NVVZCZ

Current Class: [REDACTED]

Page: 3

DECLASSIFIED